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Jan. 10, 1961

City manager

Richmond

January 10, 1961

TO THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Proposed City-County Library Consolidation

Attached is a study of the above subject made by City staff in <sup>Federal, state & local inter. Libraries</sup> cooperation with County officials, at the request of the West <sup>Libraries County Contra Costa co. Richmond, Calif.</sup> Contra Costa Taxpayers' Committee in a letter to the City Council dated September 21, 1960.

This study consists of the answers to ten basic questions relative to the administrative practicability of the consolidation proposal. Among other things, it indicates that Richmond property owners could reap a tax saving from the merger of their library system with the County's, provided that they are willing to take a corresponding reduction in the level of services which they now have.

An important consequence of such action would be the elimination of approximately one-third of the presently authorized positions in the City's system, and transfer of the remaining positions to the County service.

Therefore, the major policy question to be determined by the City Council is whether you want to see the existing level of service maintained at present costs, or whether you are interested in reducing that level in exchange for a saving.

If you choose consolidation, it should be pointed out that it will take at least a year to work out the many problems involved in discharging some employees and transferring others to the County, and otherwise negotiating a mutually satisfactory agreement with the County.

This matter has been placed on the City Council's afternoon agenda of January 23, 1961. It will be taken up at approximately 2:00 p.m. All interested parties are invited to be present and to be heard.

Respectfully,

*Edwin S. Howell*

Edwin S. Howell  
City Manager

BUREAU OF PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION LIBRARY

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Attachment:

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This matter has been placed on the City Council's agenda for January 23, 1961. It will be taken up at approximately 5:00 p.m. All interested parties are invited to be present and to be heard.

Respectfully,

John S. Howell  
City Manager

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## CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY CONSOLIDATION

### 1. Is there any duplication of library service in the Richmond area?

Service areas: The City Library serves the area within the Richmond city limits, and the County serves all the rest of the County.

Tax levies: Because Richmond maintains its own library, it does not pay the County library tax.

Reciprocal service agreements: Reciprocal service agreements have been utilized to avoid duplication of branch libraries in the areas around Richmond. The El Cerrito agreement (1949) locates the El Cerrito Library close to the Richmond border to serve both Richmond and El Cerrito people. In exchange Richmond serves El Cerrito people at the Civic Center Library and at Richmond branches. In the El Sobrante area, Richmond has also cooperated with the County in a joint venture (1959) which will benefit both City and County people. In this case, Richmond bought the land, the residents of the unincorporated neighborhood are financing an \$83,483 building, and the County will operate the service. In both these cases, one well-located library of effective size will serve the whole population of a neighborhood even though that neighborhood is made up of Richmond residents and non-residents. At the same time the cost is equitably distributed between the City and the County. It is the recently improved







level of County library services that makes this kind of joint planning practical. However, Richmond still offers many library services not provided by the County at the same level.

2. Is there any difference in the quantity of library service provided by the City and County?

Circulation: The facts are: The City serves 71,854 people (plus a number of El Cerrito residents who are also served by the County), the County 337,176 (plus some Richmond people). The City circulation of books for the 1959-60 fiscal year was 651,423 or 9.1 per capita. The County book circulation for the same period was 1,869,812, or 5.5 per capita. Thus, the City serves a smaller population but reaches a higher percentage of book borrowers. In addition, the City circulated 78,701 units (1.1 per capita) of non-book materials (phonograph records, pictures and films). The County circulated a negligible amount of such materials.

Registration: 45.6 percent of Richmond's population are registered borrowers at the City library and 38.6 percent of the rest of the County's population are registered borrowers at the County library.

Book stock: As of June 30, 1960, the City had 139,505 books, or 1.9 per capita. The County reports a book stock of 308,839 or .92 per capita.

Facilities available: The City operates a 32,000-square-foot building in the civic center for 72 hours per week. In addition, it maintains a neighborhood station at







South 41st and Potrero for 10 hours a week, at Point Richmond for 28 hours a week, and at Fourth Street for 24 hours per week. The City maintains one bookmobile for ten weekly neighborhood stops. The County has no building in the western area of the same size as Richmond's Civic Center Library. The largest County facility in the western area is the new El Cerrito Library which has about 8,000 square feet, about one-fourth the size of the City's. The County as a whole has more books than the City, but the City has the largest collection under one roof — 85,000 volumes. The new libraries being planned for El Sobrante and San Pablo will both be much smaller than the City's Civic Center Library. El Sobrante is now under construction and will be 3,500 square feet with a capacity of 14,000 volumes. Plans projected for San Pablo call for a 6,400 square feet building. In addition to the outlets named above, the County operates branches at Kensington, Pinole, and Rodeo. Altogether the County has six branches, one station and eighteen bookmobile stops in the western county, but no main library. The City has a main library, two neighborhood stations, one minimum branch and one bookmobile.

3. What is the cost of operating the Richmond library system as compared to that of the County?

Library budgets: For the fiscal year 1960-61 the City has budgeted \$327,353 for library services (employee fringe benefits and building payments are not included)







and the County \$930,000. The City's library budget comes from the General Fund, half of which is raised from revenues other than property taxes (sales taxes, service charges, license fees, etc.). The County's library budget is raised almost exclusively by a property tax levy.

Assessed valuations: The City's assessed valuation is \$173,266,452. For library purposes, the County's is \$671,386,498 (not including the County's assessed valuation for Richmond which is \$170,607,828).

Tax rates: The tax rate equivalent is \$.178 for the City and \$.129 for the County.

Per capita costs: The per capita cost is approximately \$4.59 for the City and \$2.79 for the County. The County per capita cost is \$1.80 less than that for the City. Here it is interesting to note that even though the City pays more per capita its use per capita is correspondingly higher. The City's per capita book circulation (9.1) is 65% higher than the County's (5.5). Richmond's costs are 64.5% higher. Included in the City's per capita costs is the full cost of the audio visual services and reference services not yet offered by the County at the same level.

4. Is there any difference in the quality of library service rendered by the City and the County?

Quality of service is an intangible made up of many factors, most of which cannot be measured. The following samplings attempt to give a rough idea of the situation.







Trained staff: In News Notes for California Libraries (Spring, 1960), Richmond reported 16 professional librarians; the County 21. Richmond serves 71,854 people, the County 337,176. The ratio is one professional librarian per 4,491 population in Richmond and one professional per 16,051 population in the County.

Special services: The City offers a number of special services not offered by the County at the same level. These include: A large reference collection in one building, staffed by professional reference librarians who are always available to assist the public in the use of the collection; phonograph records; picture collection; 16mm educational films; a reference collection of government documents; story hours for children.

Hours of operation: The Civic Center library is open 72 hours per week. The County's larger outlets in the western area are open on varying schedules, ranging from 62 hours per week in El Cerrito to 35 hours per week in El Sobrante.

5. Would there be any saving to Richmond taxpayers if the City library system were consolidated with that of the County?

Tax differential: The County's \$.129 tax rate for library service is less than the City's \$.178 rate by \$.049 per \$100 assessed valuation. Applying the lower County rate to a typical Richmond home assessed by the County Assessor







at \$3,500, the owner would pay an annual library tax of \$4.52. Since the City's assessed valuations run about 1.54 percent over the County's for the 1960-61 fiscal year, the same home would be assessed by the City Assessor at \$3,554. Application of Richmond's higher tax rate to this assessment would result in a yearly library tax of \$6.33. Thus, the average City property owner stands to save approximately \$1.81 per year (or \$.15 per month) if the merger takes place, provided that he is willing to settle for a lower level of service.

Buildings and grounds maintenance: At present, the City furnishes maintenance services for the Main Library, one small branch, and two neighborhood stations at an annual cost of \$23,541. Richmond also maintains the grounds surrounding the buildings at a cost of \$5,664 a year. Upon consolidation, the County would take over the building maintenance costs but not the grounds maintenance costs, in keeping with a policy established by the Board of Supervisors in 1958. This may be done under a joint agreement whereby City personnel would continue to perform all maintenance functions and the County would reimburse the City for its building maintenance costs. The effect of such an arrangement would be a \$23,541 yearly budgetary saving for the City.

6. Would there be any increased costs to the County as a result of merging the two systems?

If the two systems were merged, the County would have to pick up the clerical costs of acquiring Richmond's library materials:







Books, magazines, phonograph records, films, and supplies. This would involve processing the orders and keeping track of literally thousands of individual items. To avoid confusion it would be necessary for the Richmond system to be partially reprocessed to integrate classification and cataloging practices. This would require the costly review of 139,000 Richmond items; however, the cost would be on a non-recurring basis. When integration was completed it might then be possible to reduce the unit costs of processing the Richmond materials.

7. Would there be any difference in the level of library service furnished to Richmond residents after the consolidation?

Curtailment of services: Under present policies of the County, the level of the following services would be reduced if the City were merged with the County: Phonograph records, art prints, picture files, 16 mm sound films, occasional lectures to adults, school contacts, children's story hours, hours of opening and reference services.

8. What would be the effect of the merger on present employees of the Richmond Public Library?

Reduction in force: If the County's Library tax rate of \$.129 were applied to the County's assessed valuation for Richmond, \$170,607,828, it would yield \$220,084 in property tax revenues. The addition of an estimated \$18,939 in fines would produce a total income of \$239,023 for library purposes. This is \$88,330 less than the City's current library







budget of \$327,353, which is based on a tax yield of \$308,414 from Richmond's library rate of \$.178 plus \$18,939 in estimated fines. A cut of this size would require the elimination of approximately 11 positions from the Library's present full-time staff of 34 people. The result would be a reduction in services by roughly one-third, unless the City taxpayers are willing to pay a supplemental tax or the County is willing to increase its rate on a County-wide basis to make up the difference.

Reclassification and salaries: The remaining positions in Richmond's library service would have to be transferred to the County service. The incumbents would be blanketed into the County merit system and their positions would be reclassified by the County Civic Service Commission so as to conform with the County classification plan. After reclassification, the salary of each transferred employee would be adjusted to a step higher on the County pay scale than the step at which he was being paid by the City. If, however, the City was already paying him more than the maximum step of the County range, the County would continue to pay him at the higher rate.

Retirement and pensions: Richmond's library employees who belong to the State Employees' Retirement System can be transferred to the County's Retirement System without any loss of credit for years of service. That is, the County will accept their entry date into the State system as







their date of entry into the County system. In addition, the County system provides social security coverage, a benefit which does not exist under the State system. As a result of 1959 legislation, members of the City's General Pension System can now be transferred to the County system in the same way, provided that each employee and the City agree to deposit with the County contributions equal to the amount which would have been made on his behalf if he had belonged to the County system from the beginning.

Other fringe benefits: City library personnel transferred to the County would be entitled to the same rights and privileges as other County employees. This includes three weeks of vacation per year during the first 25 years of service and four weeks thereafter. City employees are entitled to three weeks after five years and four weeks after 20 years. The County provides 12 days of sick leave per year which can be accumulated from year to year, while the City allows 30 to 90 days, depending on length of service, but it is not cumulative. The County extends 52 weeks of injury leave to employees who have been disabled on the job, as compared to the 104 weeks offered by the City. The County pays a maximum premium of \$7.50 per month per employee to either Kaiser or Blue Shield for health insurance and also provides a group life insurance plan at no cost to the employee. The City pays \$7.45 to Kaiser or \$7.56 to Blue Cross for employee membership in either health plan, but





furnishes no group life insurance protection.

9. Would there be any loss of control to the City resulting from the consolidation?

The Library is now managed by a City Librarian who reports to the City Manager. Policy is worked out by a library commission of Richmond citizens. Final responsibility rests with the City Council -- elected representatives of the people of Richmond. If the Library were merged with the County system, the Library Commission would no longer function in the same way -- the responsible head would be the County Librarian who reports directly to the Board of Supervisors of Contra Costa County. If the City were not pleased with the service, its only line of recourse would be to try to convince the County Librarian and the Supervisors to make appropriate changes, which they might or might not be willing to do. For example, there is a difference of opinion among librarians as to whether the book is most important or the idea contained in the book. Richmond accepts the philosophy that the idea is the important element and hence its library strives to provide recorded thought in any form in which it may occur. This is reflected by the City's emphasis on non-book materials as well as books. On the other hand, it does not appear that the County subscribes to this theory to the same extent, as evidenced by its much smaller collection of non-book materials. Upon consolidation, it is fair to assume that the County philosophy would be substituted for the City's, unless Richmond could prevail upon the County Librarian and the Supervisors to do otherwise.





10. Are there any alternatives to the proposed merger of the two systems?

Extension of the present plan of reciprocal service: This assumes a gradually increasing level of County library support in the fringe areas. It would leave the management of the City library in the hands of the City. The effect on the service would be that both Richmond and County people would be free to use the most convenient library, regardless of local boundary lines.

Contracts under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act: Where benefits would accrue, the City could contract with the County, with other cities or with a combination of cities and counties.

Formation of an East Bay federation of libraries under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act: This plan could be similar in concept to the recently organized North Bay Cooperative Library System which includes 14 libraries in 5 counties. If it were adopted in the East Bay, it would leave each participating library independent, but would provide an opportunity for a number of administrations to work together and to share costs when it would be mutually advantageous. Under such an arrangement, the types of things which could be done include: Common use of one IBM machine in a central processing center to sort transaction cards for a group of libraries. (The machine that could handle Richmond's work has the capacity to handle the work of the whole East Bay); establishment of a central storage facility for the older materials of







all participating libraries; and coordination of member library services with the educational radio and TV programs available in the Bay Area.

A nine-county regional library district: In essence this alternative would expand the East Bay scheme to a nine-county (or twelve-county) plan which would be financed by a very small tax levied on a district-wide basis.



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